

## Professional Doctorate

### Guidance for examiners

The Professional Doctorate (PD) has been developed by many universities in response to two drivers. One is the demand from students keen to develop their research skills following experience in the workplace. The other driver is recognition by governments, businesses and employers worldwide of the importance of doctoral level research and analytical skills “in economic development, in improving our health, in managing our environment and across all areas of human activity”.<sup>1</sup>

The PD is one of two forms of Doctoral Degree specified in the Australian Qualifications Framework. Research is the “defining characteristic of all Doctoral Degree qualifications”. Research in the PD is typically more applied in nature than in the PhD and concentrates on practical outcomes and making “a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the context of professional practice”.<sup>2</sup>

The PD provides opportunities for research training and research skills acquisition and application to real world problems, challenges and questions in the professional fields of accountancy, business, management, cross-cultural management, diversity management, economics, finance, general management, human resource development, human resource management, international management, organisational behaviour, organisational theory, performance management, public policy, strategic management, and related fields. PD students are experienced and highly qualified professionals who will be able to draw upon workplace experience and expertise, and to extend such experience and expertise, in undertaking and completing the course of study and research training.

The PD allows students to develop relevant research skills through a carefully designed program supplemented by a dissertation and choice of relevant electives. The objectives of the PD are to enable professional to extend and build upon their professional experience through:

- Coursework that develops knowledge and skill in research methodology and research methods;
- Development of research, writing and analysis skills which enable students to produce a dissertation which constitutes an original and significant contribution to the relevant literature and/or to professional practice;
- Preparation of a substantial dissertation which adds to existing knowledge and constitutes an in-depth investigation and analysis of a particular business or professional issue or set of issues; and
- Bridging the gap between theory and practise by developing closer links between the University and experienced business professionals in fields associated with business, economics and related disciplines.

PD graduates will demonstrate:

- A systematic and critical understanding of a complex field of learning and specialised research skills for the advancement of professional practice
- A systemic and critical understanding of a substantial and complex body of knowledge of an area of professional practice; and
- Application of knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, authoritative judgement, adaptability and responsibility as an expert and leading practitioner.

PD graduates will also demonstrate expert and research skills in a discipline area to, independently and systematically:

- Engage in critical reflection, synthesis and evaluation;
- Develop, adapt and implement appropriate research methodologies;
- Disseminate and promote new insights to peers and the community; and
- Generate original knowledge and understanding to make a substantial contribution to an area of professional practice

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<sup>1</sup> *Group of Eight, The Changing PhD: Discussion Paper, March 2013*

<sup>2</sup> *Australian Qualifications Framework Council (2013), Australian Qualifications Framework, Second edition*

PD theses submitted at the University of Canberra are expected to present coherent and cogent argument communicating the significant aspects of research and writing undertaken for the degree. PD theses are required to be around 50,000 to 60,000 words, which is about two-thirds the length of a PhD thesis. Apart from this difference, a successful PD thesis will differ from a PhD thesis in its applied nature, its closer connexion with the world outside the University and its emphasis on real world outcomes which add value in workplace, professional, organisational or institutional contexts.

Consequently, one crucial element of a PD is that it considers the implications of the research conducted in terms of its contribution to practise. It would not be expected that the PD candidate would develop new theory or significantly extend current theory. It would be expected that s/he would make a meaningful contribution to knowledge in the field studied. The research design should be applicable to the professional context the candidate is working, or has worked, within, such that the results can be clearly identified as providing an opportunity to offer guidance for professional, organisational or institutional improvement.

It is important that the examination process reflects the different nature of the PD as a qualification distinct from the PhD, recognising the importance of applied practical research to innovation and development in the myriad and diverse forms of business, public policy and organisations.

### Thesis including published works

Candidates at the University of Canberra are able to include publications in their thesis. The thesis including published works does not lead to a different degree but refers to a thesis format characterised by the incorporation of one or more publications, or, presented as a series of publications (thesis by publication). A thesis can include published papers, manuscripts submitted for publication but not yet accepted; manuscripts ready for submission; or 'traditional' chapters.

A thesis including publications will be examined as a conventional thesis. Examiners of a thesis that includes one of more publications should note that recommendations for changes cannot be made to individual works that have been peer reviewed.